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REPORTS TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Draft report

1. The Administrator introduced his report to the Economic and Social Council (DP/1997/15), noting the great importance he placed on discussion of the item. He cited the common reporting format agreed on with other United Nations funds and programmes, the coverage in the report of follow-up to four related but distinct General Assembly resolutions, and the incorporation of comments and recommendations of the Executive Board on the report of the previous year.

2. He noted that the follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 96/42 was directly linked to the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 47/199 and 50/120. As Administrator, he served as Convenor of the Executive Committee of the Development Cooperation Group, one of the four sector groups created by the Secretary-General. As Convenor of the Executive Committee, he had prioritized the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 50/120 and the implementation of the Secretary-General's "track one" reform measures in the Development Cooperation Group. The Executive Committee, which met monthly, aimed to strengthen the resident coordinator system, the move to common premises and services, and to formulate a United Nations development assistance framework. On 8 April 1997, the Executive Committee had agreed to maintain the current arrangement regarding the resident coordinator system under the stewardship of UNDP, with the understanding that there would be major improvements in the way it functioned. He then described several aspects of the resident coordinator system that would be examined by the Executive Committee of the Development Cooperation Group. The Administrator elaborated on the comparative advantages of UNDP in leading the resident coordinator system. The leadership of the Administrator as Convenor of the Executive Committee of the Development Cooperation Group was coherent with that of UNDP as steward of the resident coordinator system at the country level. He noted that the Development Cooperation Group had taken up the issues of common premises and services and the proposed development cooperation framework. The Office for United Nations System Support and Services (OUNS), which supported him in his role as Convenor

of the Executive Committee, would be strengthened through future staff secondments from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

3. As one of the best examples of a coordinated system-wide undertaking, the Administrator also cited the work of inter-agency groups established by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) to constitute an integrated framework for follow-up to the major United Nations conferences. A workshop on the follow-up to conferences would be organized by OUNS and the ACC Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) in autumn 1997 at the Turin Centre, prior to continued review of the subject at the second session of ACC in 1997. The Administrator cited his interest in rationalizing the relationship between the process of the inter-agency groups and the intergovernmental reviews of the follow-up to conferences, including the need for more streamlined reporting arrangements. There could be, for example, reporting on each conference by lead agencies to the respective functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, with the support of the United Nations Secretariat. Similarly, reports based on the work of the three ACC Task Forces and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality would be prepared annually for the Council, coordinated by the Convenor of the Development Cooperation Group. Thus, both conference-by-conference reporting on overall implementation and reporting on United Nations assistance to programme countries would be possible.

4. In the follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/43, the report (DP/1997/15) cited the measures taken to enhance collaboration between UNDP and the Bretton Woods institutions. The Administrator informed the Executive Board that UNDP was aware of the new directions taken by the management of the World Bank and hoped that dialogue with the Bank would be enhanced with a view to ensuring complementarity and a division of labour between the two organizations. He expressed the view that grant-based technical cooperation aimed at building key governance capabilities for sustainable human development should be the responsibility of UNDP.

5. In referring to the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 50/227, the Administrator informed the Executive Board that UNDP was in the process of developing a comprehensive funding strategy. Owing to the number of informal consultations on other subjects, it had not been possible to hold informals to prepare the way for the funding strategy. He hoped that the paper would be available at the third regular session 1997 following discussions at the present session, at the informal consultations in June, and at the Economic and Social Council. Paragraphs 33 and 36 of document DP/1997/15 contained the kernel of a resource mobilization strategy, which would be further elaborated on in the paper. He cited the expected income for UNDP in 1997 to be an estimated $2 billion in total resources, with approximately $800 million of that amount in contributions to the core budget. He emphasized that while the target for the overall resource mobilization of UNDP would be the sum total of all resource mobilization targets of all country cooperation frameworks, the bedrock was the contributions to the core budget. The core resource mobilization target of $3.3 billion for 1997-1999 contained in Executive Board decision 95/23 should be taken seriously. Despite reform and streamlining by UNDP and improvements in governance, as cited in General Assembly resolution 50/227, the contributions to

the core budget continued to decrease. For UNDP to undertake all the work that it was responsible for and to respond effectively to the needs of developing countries, it would need increased contributions to its core budget. UNDP would like to move to a funding strategy that featured a more predictable base at a higher level than was currently the case.

6. In introducing the UNFPA reports to the Economic and Social Council (DP/FPA/1997/10 (Part V)), the Deputy Executive Director (Policy and Administration) stated that coordination of operational activities was widely recognized as the overarching priority of the United Nations development framework. In that regard, UNFPA continued to work closely with all of its development partners, in, for example, chairing inter-agency task forces on the follow-up to international conferences, in participation in such mechanisms as the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), ACC and CCPOQ, and continuing its close cooperation with other agencies and organizations in strengthening the resident coordinator system.

7. The Deputy Executive Director (Policy and Administration) informed the Executive Board that relations between UNFPA and the Bretton Woods institutions and funding for operational activities had been dealt with in the document as a build-up to the triennial policy review scheduled for 1998. The position of UNFPA on funding for operational activities was being coordinated with the United Nations Secretariat as part of the Secretary-General's report to the Economic and Social Council. The Fund was looking at new ways of collaborating with the Bretton Woods institutions within the terms of the UNFPA mandate. Other topics addressed in the report included harmonization of programme processes, national execution and national capacity-building, and monitoring and evaluation of UNFPA programmes.

General comments

8. Delegations welcomed the introductory remarks of the Administrator and the Deputy Executive Director and expressed their satisfaction with the reports to the Economic and Social Council of the Administrator (DP/1997/15) and the Executive Director (DP/FPA/1997/10 (Part V)), citing the improvements over those of previous years. Some speakers stated that more analysis and reference to problems faced by UNDP and UNFPA in implementing the legislation could be included in future reports to the Council. More information on linkages with overall United Nations reform would be welcomed. Delegations appreciated the fact that the reports employed a common format with other United Nations funds and programmes and noted that their contents illustrated progress in the follow-up and implementation of General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions. A few delegations proposed that the reports include suggested recommendations to the Council on follow-up to resolutions. One delegation requested more clarity on data in the report of UNFPA relating to country-level operations and expressed support for a recommendation of the Executive Director to lessen and streamline reporting arrangements.

9. One speaker, on behalf of the African Group, underlined the support of that regional group for the work done by UNDP to follow up the resolutions of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council, as cited in DP/1997/15.

Follow-up to implementation of General Assembly resolutions 47/199 and 50/120 and to Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/42

10. Many speakers welcomed the remarks made by the Administrator on the part of the report concerning the resolution, in particular with regard to the resident coordinator system and the increased commitment to partnership both at the headquarters and country levels. Much progress had been seen in the area, including on the harmonization of programme cycles and budget presentations. An update on programme delivery was requested, an area that many speakers stressed must continue to be a top priority of UNDP. One speaker, also on behalf of another, requested information on the 26 countries that would not have harmonized programmes by 1999. The rise in nationally executed programmes was welcomed and should be further increased. The issuance of the reference manual for operational activities was welcomed. Support for the leadership role of UNDP in the resident coordinator system was expressed. More information on the coordination of regional activities was sought.

11. Efforts to broaden the pool of resident coordinators coming from different United Nations organizations should be continued and enhanced. Some speakers requested that the Administrator continue to provide an update to the Executive Board at future sessions on the numbers of resident coordinators coming from outside of UNDP, as well as information on the staff secondments to OUNS. Many speakers emphasized the importance of strengthening the resident coordinator system and underlined the need for all organizations to be fully committed to that goal. One speaker cited the need for resident coordinators to be impartial and to function as a partner with others in the system. Another speaker requested further information about the cost of managing the resident coordinator system.

12. Several delegations urged UNDP to continue the move to common premises and services in order to fulfil the requirements of General Assembly resolution 50/120. The document (DP/1997/15) contained reservations on that issue in the view of some speakers. Some speakers supported the need to look at common premises and services on a case-by-case basis. One delegation stated that it was considering a "soft earmarking" of funding to promote common premises in 1997. Another delegation requested further information about the reference in paragraph 28 to the use of real estate management consultants by the JCGP Sub-Group on Common Premises and Services. A query was raised about whether there was a detrimental effect to harmonization when funds and programmes used different information systems.

13. Enhanced harmonization of monitoring and evaluation activities by UNDP was also encouraged.

14. Several delegations welcomed actions undertaken by UNFPA, as described in the report, in the following areas: harmonization of programme cycles and programming procedures; national execution and national capacity-building; monitoring and evaluation; decentralization; and harmonization of budget presentations. The achievement of close to a 50:50 gender ratio of Professional staff was also welcomed. With regard to monitoring and evaluation, delegations welcomed the inclusion of lessons learned in country programme presentations.

Several speakers welcomed the clear commitment of UNFPA to the resident coordinator system.

15. Many delegations supported the use by UNFPA of the programme approach and the role of the Executive Board in the programming process. They welcomed the decentralization of approval authority as a means to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of programme delivery. A few delegations questioned the effect that decentralization would have in terms of the procedures and role of the Fund's internal Programme Review Committee.

Follow-up to General Assembly resolution 50/227

16. Several delegations looked forward to receiving the UNDP paper on funding, which they stated should include information on the consequences of declines in funding levels to the core budget. Many speakers expressed concern about the shortfall in contributions to core resources. Some delegations underlined that core resources ensured fairness and universality of assistance. Some speakers cited what they considered to be an unfair burden-sharing among donors, with concentration among only a few at the highest levels. Traditional donors and emerging donors should be encouraged to contribute more to UNDP core resources. A query was raised about the linkage between core and non-core resources, as stated in paragraph 37 of document DP/1997/15. One delegation, also on behalf of another, suggested that funding on a more predictable basis, such as for a three-year cycle, could be explored. Other suggestions for innovative funding mechanisms would be welcomed. While some speakers supported the target of doubling of the UNDP resource base, as stated in the proposals for change, others questioned the viability of that target.

17. One speaker expressed support for the government cost-sharing mechanism, which he stated had not been elaborated on in the document and thus more information on the mechanism was needed for a full debate on it. The majority of cost-sharing projects in his country related directly to sustainable human development or governance programmes.

18. One delegation informed the Executive Board that a request for increased funding to UNDP over its 1997 level, to $100 million, had been made for 1998. His delegation supported the effective use of resources by UNDP as a means to ensure greater contributions from major donors. In particular, UNDP programmes must have a clear focus and duplication with programmes of other organizations should be minimized. Further economization might be needed, including the consideration of closing some UNDP offices.

19. Some speakers requested further information about the modalities for tapping of the private sector as an additional source of funding, as cited in paragraph 36 of document DP/1997/15. Caution was advised in relation to that activity, as it was noted that private capital flows often went to only a small number of countries.

20. One delegation expressed the view that the role of UNDP at the Lyon Summit should have been included in the document.

21. With regard to UNFPA resources, many delegations welcomed the conference room paper on meeting the goals of the ICPD: consequences of resource shortfalls up to the year 2000 (DP/FPA/1997/CRP.1). Delegations noted that the paper, with its clear resource targets and goals, was a good contribution for further discussion on such issues as the ways and means for increasing core resources for operational activities. The Executive Board requested that UNFPA refine the methodology contained in the paper and introduce it as a formal document at the third regular session 1997. A number of delegations supported the increase in programme resource allocations to Africa from 1995 to 1996. One delegation noted that proposed UNFPA initiatives on debt swaps would need to be examined in light of existing mechanisms for debt relief.

Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/36 and to decisions taken at major international United Nations conferences including implementation of the programmes of action adopted by them

22. Several delegations expressed support for the work of UNDP in relation to the implementation of the strategy outlined in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation for Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) publication entitled "Shaping the 21st Century" and the linkage of that strategy with the integrated framework for follow-up to United Nations conferences. One delegation emphasized the critical importance of country-level activities in that regard, and underlined the need for UNDP, in cooperation with bilateral donors, to play a leading role in local coordination of the follow-up to conferences and the DAC strategy. The delegation also requested information on the participation of UNDP in the World Bank/OECD-DAC/United Nations seminar on indicators, to be held in Paris on 20 and 21 May 1997. Positive comment was made about the UNDP role in coordination of the follow-up to conferences at both ACC and at country levels. The conference room paper on the 20/20 concept (DP/1997/CRP.20) was welcomed. Greater information on the follow-up to the World Food Summit was sought. The Administrator's proposals for enhancing the follow-up to conferences in intergovernmental forums was requested to be issued in writing.

23. Many delegations welcomed UNFPA activities in the follow-up to international conferences and, in particular, its role as Chair of the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All. UNFPA participation in the other two ACC Task Forces was also cited positively.

Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/43

24. UNDP was encouraged to continue its cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, especially the World Bank. Several speakers noted their support for the formal agreements signed by UNDP with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. More detailed information on collaboration with the World Bank in poverty assessment and strategies was requested.

25. Several delegations stated that UNFPA should continue to strengthen linkages with other multilateral organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions, and with bilateral partners. At the same time, the Fund should continue to promote and strengthen South-South cooperation. Collaboration with

the World Bank at the country level should be further strengthened to ensure greater policy coherence.

Responses

26. The Administrator thanked delegations for their comments and responded to the queries raised. He noted that it was often difficult for UNDP to quantify the impact of its activities and more analysis would be undertaken in that respect. He would welcome the views of bilateral aid organizations on how to measure the relationship between resource availability and impact.

27. He emphasized the powerful link between reform in the United Nations and at UNDP. Reform at the United Nations had been carefully monitored and was taken into consideration in the change proposals put forward by UNDP. He agreed that the resident coordinator system must serve the system as a whole. UNDP must be increasingly dedicated to supporting that system.

28. In a total of 81 countries, the programming cycles of JCGP agencies would be harmonized by 1999. Although 26 programmes would still require harmonization, he stressed the strong commitment of UNDP to doing so. The Development Assistance Framework would ensure that programming cycles were harmonized.

29. He underlined the commitment of UNDP to common premises and noted that the move from ownership to rental would reduce the need for hiring real estate consultants. Some 17 commitments from other funds and programmes had been made to broadening the pool of resident coordinators. He cited the lack of response to advertisements for certain posts as a contributing factor to the move to widen the pool. An informal mechanism to explore the differences among JCGP members information systems had begun to operate in April.

30. The Administrator stated that UNDP would reach out to emerging donors for contributions to core resources. He was cautiously optimistic that some progress would be made in that area, but emphasized that contributions from traditional donors could not be replaced. UNDP would proceed cautiously in raising money from private sources. He confirmed that UNDP was contributing its ideas to the discussion at the Economic and Social Council on innovative sources of financing. He noted that the decline in core contributions was linked to an overall decline in official development assistance (ODA). The United Nations share of ODA must be increased. In that regard, UNDP could manage twice the amount of resources it had at the present time. He welcomed an informal discussion with the Executive Board on resource mobilization. In response to the query raised, he stated that increased contributions to core could indeed provide an impetus to increased non-core contributions, as cited in paragraph 37 of the document. He informed the Board that he would make a separate presentation on programme delivery later in the session.

31. In response to queries raised, he noted that UNDP had played a role in both the Lyon Summit and in developing the DAC strategy. The follow-up to the World Food Summit as a more recent conference had not moved along as far as that of the other conferences. He noted that the Food and Agriculture Organization of

the United Nations and ACC had agreed that the follow-up would occur within the framework of the integrated follow-up to conferences.

32. The Deputy Executive Director (Policy and Administration), in response to a query raised, explained that at present, programmes and subprogrammes and some projects were approved by the Programme Review Committee. UNFPA would strive towards greater decentralization in order to enable the country offices to approve all projects and the details of the subprogrammes. With regard to collaboration with the World Bank, he noted that such collaboration was well established through work at the country level in programme development and in consultations between World Bank officials and UNFPA geographical division heads on strategies aimed at ensuring coherence. UNFPA and the World Bank also collaborated, inter alia, in South-South cooperation and in the Global Contraceptive Commodity Programme. UNFPA was working with the World Bank and OECD/DAC on refining indicators for sustainable development.

33. The President informed the Executive Board that the issue of resource mobilization in UNDP would be taken up in informal consultations in June 1997.

34. The Executive Board took note of the reports of the Administrator on reports to the Economic and Social Council (DP/1997/15) and the report of the Executive Director to the Economic and Social Council (DP/FPA/1997/10 (Part V)) and the comments made therein, and decided to transmit the reports to the Economic and Social Council.